

Spurgeon's Prayer

O Shepherd of Israel, deal a heavy blow at the wolves and keep Your sheep in their own true pastures, free from the poisons of error.

O God, we would stir You up.

We know You sleep not, and yet sometimes it seems as if You have slept awhile and left things to go on in their own way.

We beseech You awake.

Plead Your own cause. ... We know Your answer, "Awake! awake! put on Your strength, O Zion."

This we would do, Lord, but we cannot do it unless You do put forth Your strength to turn our weakness into might.

Our hearts are weary for You, our King,

... you are a King forgotten in Britain.

You are a King despised among Your own people.

Great God save this nation!

O God of heaven and earth stay the floods of infidelity and filthiness that roll over this land.

Would to God that we might see better days!

God, bless our country.

Remember us and be gracious unto all ranks and conditions of men.

Come, we beseech You Lord, come quickly!

"Father glorify Your Son that Your Son also may glorify You," and let the days come when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

O Lord bless this nation and Your work.

Let the holy service of prayer never cease, and let the intercession be accepted of God, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

How Shall We Then Live?

There is a belief among some historians that the world and society reorders and realigns itself about every 500 years or so.

- Two thousand years ago Christianity emerged, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the world changed forever.
- Fifteen hundred years ago the Roman Empire fell ushering in the beginning of the Dark Ages.
- A thousand years ago the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople split from the Catholic Church in Rome in what historians called the Great Schism. This pitted the east against the west in culture, politics, and religion effectively beginning denominationalism.
- Five hundred years ago, in the midst of great societal upheaval, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg and he, along with the other reformers, stood against the ecclesiastical dominance of Rome and freed Christianity from the abusive power of Catholicism.
- Based along this timeline there a belief that in the 2020 we are again in another season of societal upheaval and realignment.

[One last thought before I read our text. What was unique about the reformers, unlike in any previous upheaval, was their ability to verbalize, write, and publish the very principles that guided their path—these principles are known as the 5 Solas.]



(Heb. 4:2) ^{4:1}Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

PRAY

In 1912 Guglielmo Marconi predicted that his invention of the radio would put an end to war.

No more miscommunications, no more secrets, therefore no more division.

But then 200 million people were murdered in the century that followed.

Meanwhile during that time we came up with better ways to communicate and connect with mobile and wireless devices ...

... none of which has put an end to miscommunication or division ... in fact the opposite is true.

What was promoted to be social media that would bring the world together is actually anti-social media.

No one would disagree with me when I say that our world is deeply divided ... in fact most would agree that it is in fact, more divided than it has ever been.

... and the division has become openly hateful, angry and violent.

How will there ever be unity and peace?

“But Nathan, the world has always been divided.”

... I admit that is true when you think of the whole globe as one... but history records periods where nations have had peace and unity.

... In WW1 and WW2 American came together to meet the challenges of fascism and nazism.

... After 9/11 America came together.

But that is not our present situation.

Apparently, there is a **segment of society** in our nation (and in the world) that has come to the conclusion that the only way to have unity and peace is to **cancel, kill and criminalize** anything and anyone that disagrees with it.

This is what is at the root of the “cancel culture.”

This is what is driving the accusations of “hate-speak” “injustice” and “racism.”

“If they won’t agree with us, support what we want, give us what we want and chant our mantras then they are racist, they are promoting systems of injustice, **they must be neutralized.**”

Let me begin today with an illustration to give us context for what I am saying.

Just last Monday Americans saw a headline, coming out of Princeton University where the administration announced that it would be removing the name of President Woodrow Wilson from its school of Public and International studies.

Woodrow Wilson a President of the United States, a former governor of New Jersey, as well as professor and president of Princeton University.

He was probably the most influential Democratic president after the Civil War and before Franklin Roosevelt.

Though a progressivist in many ways, when it came to issues of race, he was an avowed white supremacist who effectively ended the employment of African-Americans in the United States

civil service ... one of the major avenues of advancement given to African-Americans after reconstruction.

This was the reason Princeton gave for why it was removing his name from the Princeton school.

However, as you might expect, there is much more to the story.

A few weeks back a group of students and alumni presented a set of demands to Princeton's president and to the board of trustees and demanded that they receive a response from the school by July 6th.

The demands they made were not just that Woodrow Wilson's name be removed, they issued a mandate for the comprehensive transformation of Princeton University, right down to what is taught in every classroom... and how it is taught.

Their demands reveal that these students and alumni hate America and they want our constitutional government destroyed and replaced.

Allow me to quote from their written demands. *"Below we lay out the following six demands which outline our call for justice and change. ... These demands are to be taken seriously, addressed directly and responded to by the school's administration in their entirety by July the 6th, 2020."*

I want you to notice that there is no mention of conversation or dialogue. There is no request for debate over these massive changes they outlined ...

... just six demands that they say must be met in their entirety without question or the administration and institution of Princeton University would be declared and labeled racist and complicit in the protection of injustice.

Monday morning, June 29, 2020, we saw how the administration and trustees of Princeton University responded to these demands.

This is only one of many examples I could use to illustrate the disorder that is rampant in our country.

... Instead of reasonable conversations and dialogue, chaos dominates the national mood and discourse.

Vandalism is normal and even encouraged and endorsed by elected officials and community leaders.

... there is a growing segment in our population that believes everything that has been must now be destroyed, removed, and deleted from our national consciousness.

... to put it plainly they want to burn America to the ground and rebuild it from the ashes.

- The division today in in the spirit of antichrist who we see in Revelation killing all those who will not receive the mark of the beast.
- As you watch our society shift you are going to see it is not shifting from inequality to equality ... just a different inequality.
- People's passion for what they want regardless the consequence is demonic.

I believe that what we are seeing right now is our world realigning itself much like it did in 70 A.D. 500, 1000, and 1500.

So, I am coming to you today to warn you ...

... as this world realigns itself, **we the church** must be careful that we do not realign along with it.

We need to stand firm against this cataclysmic culture shift

... and I believe the principles that grounded the leaders of the reformation are the very principles that we need to ground us.

1. God's Word Is the Only Thing That Truly Unifies

4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Sola Scriptura asserts that scripture must govern over church traditions and interpretations which are themselves held to be subject to scripture. All church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the teachings of scripture as the divinely inspired Word of God.

As the world began to rapidly change the reformers were unable to find sure foundation for belief and behavior in the teachings of the church.

They needed something more than the word and assurances of the clergy.

In fact, the more the church said and taught the more contradictory it became and the more divided the people were.

The reformers believed the plain teachings of the Word of God was the answer.



What you are seeing is what is called a rood screen. (rood was another word for crucifix)

Before the reformation when you went into a church the pulpit area was separated from the congregation by this gated wall made of metal or wood.

It symbolized the separation that the church taught existed between the clergy and the people.

- Congregations didn't sing
- People didn't read the bible
- Christians didn't pray

The first thing that the reformers did was to tear down the rood screen and put up a table with an opened Bible on it.

The open Bible symbolized that everyone had access to the Bible, and everyone had access to God ...

... for the first time in 1000 years congregations were allowed to sing.

The Word of God has the power to unify ... notice in the Hebrews 4:2 verse the only thing left that divided was the absence and presence of faith.

The Word of God profits everyone who has faith.

2. The Bible Unifies Because it tells the truth about God and Us

(Hebrews 3:1) Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

- Without the Bible the word “GOD” has no content or meaning.
- Without the Bible the word “Man” is completely misunderstood.

The Bible not only reveals God but teaches us that God is most perfectly revealed in His son Jesus Christ.

It tells us that God is holy, pure, infinite, glorious, righteous, loving, kind, just and glorious ...

It tells us that God creates, He loves, can be jealous, gets angry, cares ...

But here is the really great thing ... when God’s Word tells us what He is like, it is not only absolutely true in its revelation, but that description says something about us.

The Bible tells us that man is created in the image of God that is where the value and dignity of humanity and human life comes from.

If humanity is created in the image of God then all of it ... homosexuality, gender fluidity, trans gender lifestyles, abortion, racism, murder, immorality ...

... all of it is a violation of our created order.

If humanity is created in the image of God then whether you are a preacher, doctor, president, factory worker, retail clerk, salesman, gas station attendant ... every work has dignity.

Human earthly thinking says that the more one accomplishes, the more one has, the more one acquires ... then the more important and valuable you are.

Read the words, listen to the people crying out against injustices and racism, they don't have to talk too long before they are praising one person and tearing down another...

In their efforts of justice and equality without God they are just replacing one injustice and inequality with another.

The reformers realized what we have forgotten that only an adherence to the teachings of the Bible can bring true equality.

Furthermore, based upon the biblical teaching of the priesthood of the believer ... all Christians have access to the very throne of God!

3. The Bible Teaches the True Religion

(Heb. 3:12-14) ¹² Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

If the devil can't destroy you by getting you to do bad, he will destroy you by getting you to do good.

In his book **Dominion**, Tom Holland, makes the point that in the absence (or the rejection) of true religion (Christianity) people will gravitate toward some other system of belief.

That is something of what is happening right now.

What we are seeing in the streets of our nation (marching, destruction, tearing down and defacing monuments and graves) is not merely political and societal ...

...it is deeply religious ... and it's been a long time coming.

The New York Times, in an op-ed piece 2 weeks ago called this new religion "The Intolerant Church of Wokeness."

Here **Douglas Murray** (Editor of the Spectator, a British Newspaper) description of this new religion.

We are watching the rise of a "whole new societal morality. To raise the plight of women, gays, people of different racial backgrounds and those who are trans has become not just a way to demonstrate compassion but a demonstration of a form of morality. It is how to practice this new religion. To 'fight' for these issues and to extol their cause has become a way of showing that you are a good person."—Douglas Murray *The Madness of Crowds* (2019)

The writer of Hebrews warns us to take care because an unbelieving heart will be susceptible to the deceitfulness of sin.

Knowing, believing, and having faith in the Word of God has always been essential but never more needed than it is right now.

The reformers took seriously the fact that humanity needs the answers given by God in the Bible not only to know the meaning of life and the difference between right and wrong ...

... they also knew that the Bible is the only way to have an open and vibrant relationship with God.

... The reformers understood not only that God exists, but that God has spoken to us in a way that He can and means to be understood.

... for the next few weeks we are going to look at

- God's Word Alone Truly Unifies-*Sola scriptura*

- Genuine Meaning and Equality is only found in Christ-*Solus Christus*
- God's Glory Overrides Our Perspective-*Soli Deo gloria*
- The Destination is More Important than the Journey-*Sola gratia & Sola fide*